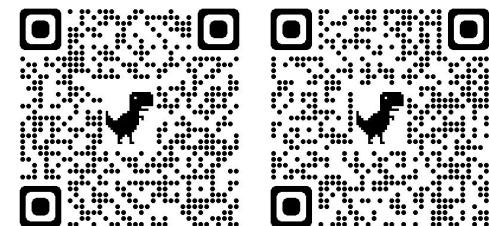


# Hard Conversations on mailing lists

Enrico Olivelli - ASF Member, member of a few PMCs

# Something about me

- I love Open Source and the Apache Software Foundation
- PMC member in Apache ZooKeeper and Apache Pulsar
- Currently PMC Chair of Apache Curator and Apache Bookkeeper
- Committer in Apache Maven
- ASF Member
- Contributor of few OSS projects out of the ASF, like HerdDB.org and Pravega.io
- Working at DataStax, 99% of my day is on OSS software: Apache Pulsar and LangStream.ai



pulsar.apache.org

langstream.ai

# Agenda

- Community over Code
  - Apache projects are communities of volunteers
  - How does a project look like and work
- Mailing lists
- Hard Conversations
- Hard Conversations + Mailing lists
- Suggestions

# Community over Code

- Apache projects are communities of people
- (In theory) We are all “volunteers”
- Distributed all across the world
- Different cultures (but we use English)
- Different time zones
- Hobbyists, Professionals...

# Anatomy of an ASF project - assets

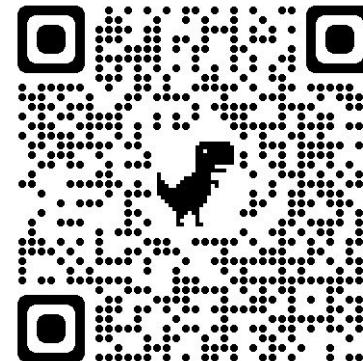
Each ASF project has:

- Some source code somewhere
  - 1 or more repositories
- A Website
- Releases repository
- Mailing lists (user, dev, private, security...)
- An issue tracker (JIRA, GitHub...)
- Other means to communicate (slack, video calls...)
- No bindings with particular companies/vendors

# Anatomy of an ASF project - people

You can see people with different roles:

- Users
- Contributors (aka “developers”)
- Committers
- PMC members
  - PMC = “Project Management Committee”



<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/#roles>

# Interactions in a project

Typical cases of interactions in a project:

- Support users
- Discussions about problems and solutions
- Designing new features
- Patches (PRs) reviews
- VOTE on releases
- Announcing news
- Discussions about the community
- Project Management Committee discussions

# Synchronous Communications (chat...)

Characteristics of chats:

- You must be online
- Quick and short answers
- Hard to catch up and participate to discussions
- Hard to refer to previous answers

Ideal for:

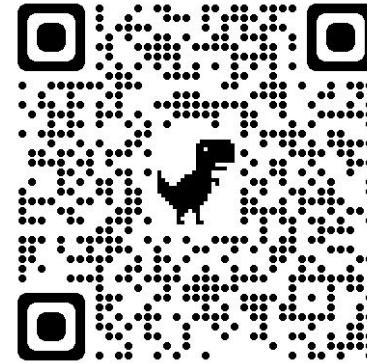
- Chatting !
- Quick responses to questions
- Direct Messages
- Pinging people

# Mailing lists and communication

Mailing lists, very old style ! But still great

Why they are the preferred way:

- They are asynchronous
- They are easily archived and linkable



<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/#management>

# Asynchronous is better !

Why email threads are preferred:

- Folks from different time zones
- People participate in their “spare time”
  - You are not always “online”
  - You can catch up when (and if) you want
- When you write you **“slow down”**
  - More time to think
  - More time to read and understand the questions and the answers
  - English is not the mother language for everyone
- Ideal for:
  - Taking decisions
  - Long discussions
  - Answers to non trivial questions
  - Announcing news

# Community = Shared goals ?

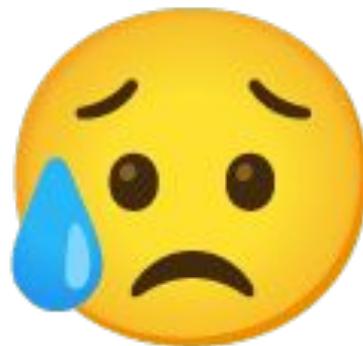
- People are part of a community share “something”
- In an ASF project this is a “Project”, some “code”
- But we have different goals:
  - Fun
  - Education/Study
  - Profit
  - Looking for a job
  - Personal fame

# Hard Conversations

- Nobody can “take decisions” by themselves
- Different goals and culture -> Conflicts
- Examples:
  - I don't like your solution !
  - Is this really a problem or not ?
  - Is this a security issue or not ?
  - Is something making the project no longer “vendor neutral” ?
  - He is too picky in his reviews !

# Examples

Sorry, can't disclose much in a public conference

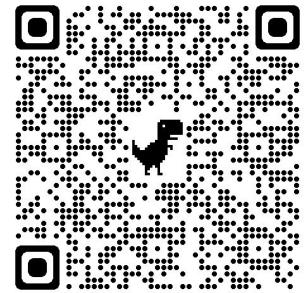


# Suggestions for good discussions

- Be objective, not personal
  - Keep feelings out of answers (“slow down”)
  - Use only technical points
- Provide enough context to let the others understand your points
- Ask for more context if you don’t understand the question or problem
- Don’t be shy, speak up and share your point of view (“IMHO”, “my 2 cents...”)
- Don’t be aggressive
- Reach consensus before acting on the shared assets of the project

# Suggestions for good discussions

- No more than 2 emails on a thread per day
- if you feel insulted by an answer, stop for a few hours and re-read with new eyes, you will probably see positive aspects you completely missed the first time (because focused on the bad feeling)
- in general, **people have good intents**, didn't think they could be read as aggressive
- be concise:
  - “I'm sending you a long letter because I don't have time to write a short one”



[https://www.linternaute.fr/citation/10605  
/je-vous-ecris-une-longue-lettre-parce-que  
-je-n-ai-blaise-pascal/](https://www.linternaute.fr/citation/10605/je-vous-ecris-une-longue-lettre-parce-que-je-n-ai-blaise-pascal/)

# Thank you !

<https://www.apache.org/foundation/how-it-works/>

ASF id: eolivelli (@apache.org)  
Twitter: @eolivelli  
LinkedIn: Enrico Olivelli

